

Abdu'l-Bahá's Travels to the West

New York, 26 May-20 June 1912
Spiritual happiness

Talks in New York City

'Abdu'l-Bahá returned to New York City from 26 May to 20 June, with short trips to Fanwood New Jersey 31 May-1 June, Milford, Pennsylvania 3 June and Philadelphia 8-10 June. He gave many talks.



'Abdu'l-Bahá in Philadelphia 1912

Talks in New York City

In a talk at the Church of the Ascension in New York on 2 June 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained spiritual happiness.



Church
of the
Ascension
New York

Spiritual Happiness

Consider how the animal has attained the fullest degree of physical felicity. A bird perches upon the loftiest branch and builds there its nest with consummate beauty and skill. All the grains and seeds of the meadows are its wealth and food; all the fresh water of mountain springs and rivers of the plain are for its enjoyment. Truly, this is the acme of material happiness, to which even a human creature cannot attain. This is the honor of the animal kingdom.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 60)

Spiritual Happiness

But the honor of the human kingdom is the attainment of spiritual happiness in the human world, the acquisition of the knowledge and love of God. The honor allotted to man is the acquisition of the supreme virtues of the human world. This is his real happiness and felicity. But if material happiness and spiritual felicity be conjoined, it will be “delight upon delight.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 60)



Church
of the
Ascension
New York

Spiritual Happiness

As heretofore material civilization has been extended, the divine civilization must now be promulgated. Until the two agree, real happiness among mankind will be unknown. By mere intellectual development and power of reason, man cannot attain to his fullest degree—that is to say, by means of intellect alone he cannot accomplish the progress effected by religion.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 60)

Spiritual Happiness

Therefore, the world of humanity must be confirmed by the breath of the Holy Spirit in order to receive universal education. Through the infusion of divine power all nations and peoples become quickened, and universal happiness is possible.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 60)

Church of the Ascension
New York



Juliet Thompson's Portrait

Between 1 June and 5 July 1912, Juliet Thompson prepared her portrait of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in six sittings.

“The Master was seated in a dark corner, His black 'abá melting into the background; and again I saw Him as the *Face of God*, and quailed. How could I paint the Face of God?”

(Juliet Thompson, *The Diary of Juliet Thompson*, p.299)

Juliet Thompson's Portrait

'I want you,' He said, 'to paint My Servitude to God.'

“Oh my Lord,” I cried, “only the Holy Spirit could paint *Your* Servitude to God. No human hand could do it. Pray for me, or I am lost. I implore You, inspire me.”

'I will pray,' He answered, 'and as you are doing this only for the sake of God, you will be inspired.'

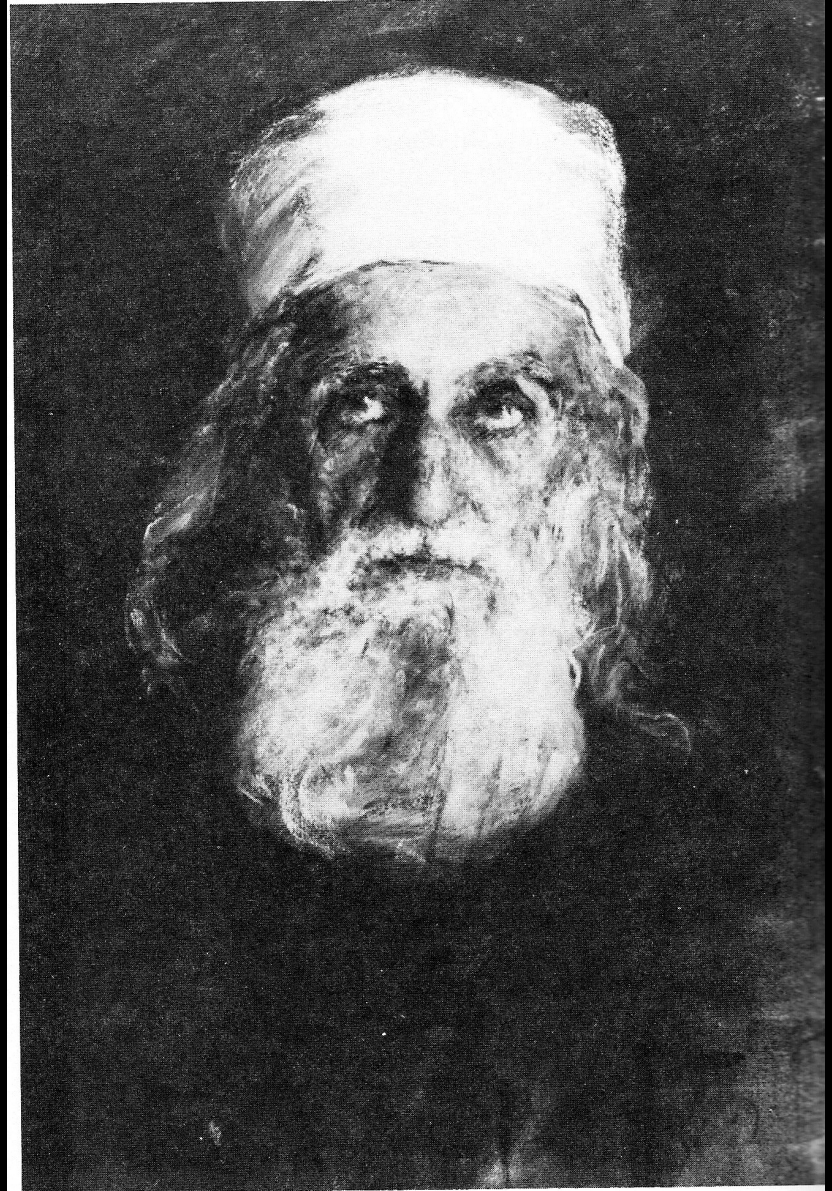
Juliet Thompson's Portrait

“And then an amazing thing happened. All fear fell away from me and it was as though Someone Else saw through my eyes, worked through my hand.... I painted in ecstasy, free as I had never been before.”

(Juliet Thompson, *The Diary of Juliet Thompson*, p.299)

Juliet Thompson's
portrait of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

June 1912





'Abdu'l-Bahá in New York 1912